Islam and Christianity have been living side by side for almost 1,400 years, always as neighbours, mostly as rivals and far too often as enemies. In fact, they may be regarded as co-religionists since they share the same Jewish, Hellenistic and Oriental heritage. At one and the same time they have been old acquaintances and intimate hereditary enemies, and their conflicts have been particularly bitter precisely because of their common origins. Both sides have been divided more by their similarity than by their differences.

The Islamic culture is therefore not as foreign to Christians as it appears to be in the light of Western prejudices and clichés. One of the most persistent and widespread myths is that Charles Martel, the ruler of the Franks, saved the West from destruction by his victory over the "Saracens" at Poitiers in 732. The Saracens were driven back over the Pyrenees and they returned to southern Spain where a Muslim state then continued to flourish for almost 800 years. This Islamic presence on the European continent did not lead to a collapse of the
Western civilization but instead to a unique and fruitful symbiosis between Islam, Christianity and Judaism which resulted in an unparalleled boom in science, philosophy, culture and art.

At the close of the Middle Ages, both Islam and Judaism were constitutive elements in the formation of Europe. As a result, Islam is at the same time an alien, an original and - due to growing migration - a new element in the Europe of today. A Europe that is increasingly populated by people who like the so called “enanciados” in the Moorish Spain live in a no-man’s land between the different cultures.

There are already between 15-20 million Muslims in the European Union and their numbers will still increase due to a continuing migration. Estimates speak about 60 million in 25 years. The European Union is therefore no longer conceivable without an “Islamic green” component. Whether it will be possible to construct the “European house” based on the model of Alhambra – the symbol of the multicultural Moorish Spain – is therefore a decisive question for the future of Europe. Racism, intolerance and a narrow nationalism have already gained strength throughout Europe in reaction to the present level of immigration which is insignificant compared with what we are likely to see in the future.

If integration fails and immigrants with a Muslim background feel that they are subject to religious tutelage, forced into ghettos and socially marginalized, with continuing high rates of unemployment we will have to reckon with the emergence of underground
fundamentalist Koran schools in our immigrant suburbs, and with teachers who urge their pupils to fight with all their means against what they regard as oppressive European societies.

Instead of a modern, tolerant "EuroIslam" we would then see the development of a "Ghettoislam", supported by fundamentalist forces in the Islamic world. Radical mullahs throughout Western Europe are already now attempting to exploit the psychological, cultural and material problems of Muslim immigrants for their own purposes, and politicians such as Jean-Marie Le Pen, Jörg Haider and most recently Pia Kjaersgaard are giving them wind in their sails as a result of the polarization which they have advocated in France, Austria and Denmark.

If developments take this direction, we must reckon that militant Muslim organizations will also endeavour to pursue their struggle with the Western World in Europe which they regard as the incarnation of all evil.

In this case, a "holy war" can become a reality in Western Europe sooner than we suppose, though not in the form of a military struggle between the West and the Islamic world or the clash of civilizations that Huntington is suggesting but as a kind of permanent guerrilla warfare in the ghetto-suburbs of our major cities.

To prevent this from happening is probably the greatest challenge we Europeans have to meet in the years to come.

There are several questions we need to face.
To what extent should European countries be opened up to non-European immigration, including the reception of refugees?

What religious, cultural and linguistic elements in the identity of immigrants are to be furthered, tolerated or resisted? Multiculturalism has become a prestigious concept, but it has a broad spectrum of meanings, ranging from the question of whether the genital mutilation of girls should be tolerated, whether girls should be allowed to wear veils in schools, to the issue of multicultural curricula.

One essential prerequisite for successful integration is that we broaden our knowledge of the diversity of Islam and the varied nature of Muslim immigration. Now that the red communist peril has disappeared, we are often made to believe that it has been replaced by a green Muslim threat. This image is already being exploited to reinforce the feeling of European unity by depicting a scenario of uniform, fanatical Muslim masses preparing to storm the bastions of the West's welfare systems under the green banners of Islam, with scimitars in one hand and the Koran in the other.

The Muslims in Europe are however not a featureless third world mob, but people from all classes in the society and with varying degrees of religiosity. The majority have a relaxed relationship to religion and only a minority are organized members of a religious or political community.
As a result, Europe is not currently facing the threat of a fundamentalist fifth column of Muslim immigrants. Instead, Islam's internal splits are clearly reflected in the Diaspora. Muslims in Europe are not only divided by their different languages, cultures and skin colouring, but also by the various branches and sects of Islam which are often in bitter competition with each other for Muslim souls. Perhaps the greatest problem currently faced by Muslim immigrants is that due to their diversity they often lack a common spokesman or a representative organization which can present their case. This is not least a problem for the many secular Muslims who want to integrate in our societies.

A policy designed to facilitate the integration of Muslim immigrant groups must be based on the following facts.

Firstly. There are already large Muslim communities in most West-European states. These communities will not only expand but they will also demand greater political influence as increasing numbers of Muslims become naturalized citizens and enfranchised in their new home countries.

Three-four decades ago the Muslim immigrants were coming to Europe looking for work and they planned to return home as soon as possible. They therefore remained marked by their culture of origin, Indo-Pakistani, North African or Turkish. The parents tried to protect their children from the unfamiliar European environment rather than integrating them into it. But most of these immigrants never went back. Their children were born in Europe and became better educated than their parents. This led to
new ways of thinking and now we can see how some kind of silent revolution is taking place among the younger Muslim population in Europe. European Muslims are now Muslims and not North-African, Indo-Pakistani or Turkish Muslims and a European Islamic culture is slowly developing.

Islam is thus already today an integral part of Europe and a European religion and as we have been talking about Eastern Christianity we will soon be talking about Western Islam. Islam must therefore be recognized and regarded as a "domestic" religion. There is nothing which intrinsically prevents a Muslim from being as good a Swede as a member of the Pentecostal Bretheren or an adherent of the Jewish faith, or that mosques cannot become as natural a feature of Swedish cities as churches have always been in Aleppo, Damascus, Mosul or Cairo.

Secondly. Muslims are not as easy to integrate and not as willing to be integrated as previous immigrant groups. Although Jews and Christians are accepted as "peoples of the book", Islam has always, with some exceptions e.g. in India, been a dominant and hegemonic religion in historical terms. In Europe, Muslims must learn to live as a minority and to accept the fundamental pillars of modern European societies, that is to say pluralism and a secular social system characterized by tolerance of people with different political or religious viewpoints.

An Islamic identity encompasses customs and traditions which deviate from those which are regarded as acceptable in the societies in which many Muslims are now living. Demands will be made for special rights and for a special status, in addition to the entitlements enjoyed by the
native population. In many cases, these demands will not only be difficult to satisfy, but impossible, and this will lead to tensions.

Undesirable and undemocratic political tendencies in their countries of origin may become channelled into their new home countries. Both the governments of Muslim states and the various sects and organizations may attempt to exploit the immigrants for their own purposes.

In the light of these factors, what is the best way to integrate the Muslim immigrants?

The objective must be integration which is as rapid as possible, taking into account and respecting those who, while respecting our values, wish to maintain their own cultural and religious identity. Taking into account special religious features must not, however, extend to excusing pupils from aspects of their education which do not suit their parents. We must also not be too easy-going in dealing with religious and political fanatics who utilize their exile in Europe for subversive activities directed against their home countries or for internal disputes.

Under no circumstances should tolerance be extended to totalitarian views or ideas. While we should demonstrate sympathy for Islam as a religion and ensure that the prerequisites for the exercise of religion are as favourable as possible, we must also demonstrate firmness regarding compliance with our own laws. At the same time, we must beware of regarding all religious expressions as signs of fundamentalism, or unwillingness to adapt and
become integrated into our societies. A process of islamization amongst immigrants is only dangerous if it comes into conflict with the norms of a pluralistic society and a democratic state.

For many immigrants from Muslim countries religion and a general sense of piety is one way of counteracting the feeling of rootlessness which they experience. Thus, a return to religion may be a by-product of the break with their own cultural background and not necessarily a protest against the new society in which they are living. Hence, greater religiosity is not the same thing as suspicion and intolerance of a secularized European environment but may, instead, create an inner tranquillity which promotes tolerance and hence integration.

Individuals who devote themselves to preaching a doctrine of hatred directed against Europe and against Christianity, and who abuse our pluralistic societies, must be dealt with firmly. But, at the same time, we must not regard radical Muslim groups as an expression of an overall campaign to attack the Western World from within. There is no such plan and, furthermore, there is no Muslim leadership capable of drawing up such a campaign. Antagonism and enmity between different sects are often stronger than hatred of the Western World. Only a few of the 60-70,000 Muslims in Sweden who practise their religion are fundamentalists. As far as the vast majority are concerned, the cultural and identity-supportive aspects of their religion are the most important factors.
Only a depoliticized and liberal Islam can be integrated into Europe, and such an integration is only possible if it is paralleled by economic and social integration. In its turn, one prerequisite for a development of this kind is controlled immigration and a common European immigration policy designed to create a liberal and tolerant Islamic community in Europe.

If this is to be achieved, those who are willing to become integrated must feel that they are welcome and that they belong here. The feeling of "where do I belong?" is one of the primary breeding grounds for fundamentalists who want to create and exploit a spiritual ghetto under the banner "you have no affinities either here or with your corrupt and morally decadent government in your home country - you have to fight against both of them".

If Muslim immigrants are to be able to feel that they belong, it is essential that:

- The demonic factor needs to be eliminated on a mutual basis. The knowledge about the Islamic faith must be improved in our schools. Ignorance breeds prejudice and hatred. The media must also rectify the stereotyped and oversimplified view of Islam which is still being conveyed.

- Our societies must protect everyone who wants to be integrated into European society, but who is under threat and under pressure not only from local extremists and groups which are hostile to immigrants, but also from Muslim extremist groups.
- Immigrants must be given an opportunity to formulate and articulate their views and wishes.

A future Europe with a flourishing Muslim presence and an open European identity must be based on self-criticism, a permanent and open dialogue and a respect for diversity. We must realise that Muslims can make a positive contribution in the construction of a new Europe. Their presence should be seen as a source of enrichment and not as a problem.

The Muslim immigrants on their part should regard themselves as full citizens and participate in the social, economic, organisational and political life of the countries where they live. In the European legislations there is nothing to prevent Muslims or any other citizens from making decisions in accord with their religion.

Muslims themselves must become work with the aim of giving the young generations which grow up in Europe a cultural background of their own while, at the same time, integrating them socially into their European environment. The Muslim communities must cooperate with each other and avoid fighting out their theological and political disputes on European territory.

As a result, a "domestic" European Muslim leadership will have to emerge, thus permitting the elimination of the label attached to Islam as an alien and dangerous cult. This domestic leadership will not only consist of Muslims born in Europe, but also of native converts.
Problems of discrimination should not be seen as "attacks on Islam" but as effects of social policies that can be changed by political means when Muslim citizens demand equal rights. The Muslim communities must assume their responsibilities and engage in a dialogue with their own communities and with the European environment and reject simplistic visions of "us against them". The Muslim communities must not shut themselves off and become isolated minorities. Such a policy would only encourage extremist groups with their message "You are more Muslim if you are against the West".

The Muslims must also place stress and value on civic education and citizen participation which are necessary steps to achieve their legitimate rights.

Most Muslims are aware of the necessity to comply with laws and regulations in their new home countries, but this willingness is undermined in many quarters by external appeals by organizations which prefer a "pure" Islam, without compromise. Therefore we must not tolerate the establishment of parallel political institutions, like the attempts to create "a caliphate state" (Halifele devleti) in Germany or a separate Muslim parliament in Britain.

For the first time in their history Muslims are living as minorities in secular societies. Traditional Islamic theology divides the world into two zones; dar al-Islam (the house of Islam) and dar al-Harb (the house of war). This world view assumes that Muslims will never be able
to practice their religion properly in non-Muslim lands and therefore should not settle there.

A crucial question is therefore how the Muslims in Europe shall relate to the national legal systems in the countries where they live.

Thus far Islamic legal experts have not given any detailed global answers to these questions but some basic principles have emerged from debates between ulema from the Islamic world and intellectuals living in Europe:

- A Muslim in Europe should see him- or herself as involved in a contract both moral and social with the country in which he or she lives and should respect that country’s laws.

- European secular legislation should allow Muslims to practice the basics of their religion.

- The concept of dar al-Harb is not Koranic and is not part of the prophetic tradition and should therefore be seen as outdated.

Fresh ideas are therefore necessary such as dar ash-shahada ("the house of testimony"), a new concept referring to any place where Muslims can live according to the precepts of their religion.

Tariq Ramadan, grandson of Hassan al Banna the founder of the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood and one of the most prominent spokesmen of this new thinking, has said: "As a Muslim I can be at home anywhere I am safe and where the
rule of law protects my freedom of conscience and my freedom to worship. In this new environment my responsibility is to bear witness of my faith".

Young Muslims are now going back to the text of the Koran and asking themselves: "Is what my parents used to do really part of my faith or is it part of their cultural tradition?" When the cultural surrounding changes the interpretations will necessarily change. One concrete example is the increasing resistance among young European Muslim women against arranged marriages.

With the widespread availability of mosques and religious instruction strictly religious problems are getting more marginal. Instead, young people are more concerned with resolving the social and political issues facing Muslims such as employment, equality in the labour market, political representation, and the way in which Muslim history and religion are taught at schools. Muslims are going to make their voices heard more and more on these issues. They want to take part in government at the local, national and European level.

Young Muslims now mobilize for recognition, identity and survival. They often look upon themselves as a new force distancing themselves from traditional and international bonds, wanting to be a European face of Islam. They are not only born in the West by Muslim parents. Some of them have grown up in mixed marriages and they know both a Muslim and a Christian way of living. They speak the languages and are born citizens of European states and their common language is English, German, Dutch, French or Swedish.
They are using Islam as a way of establishing the universal values they have in common with those around them. Defining their own identity as Muslim thus is a way of interacting with the rest of society.

With the sociological change there will be an ideological change as well. In Islam law and ethics are identical. If you change the ethics you thus change the law. Through the principle of "idjtihad" (to develop, interpret and apply Muslim doctrines to contemporary situations) there will be a new interpretation of Islam. The integration of Europe’s Muslims depends on the adoption of a form of Islam that embraces the principal Western political values; pluralism, tolerance, the separation of church and state, democratic civil society and individual human rights.

We are already today witnessing the emergence and creation of a several European Muslim identities, German, French, British, Swedish, Dutch etc. Interviews with Swedish Muslims show that they are more and more focusing on their presence, role and future in Sweden: What kind of multicultural Sweden do we as Muslims want to have in the future? What kind of multicultural state do we think is necessary to safeguard the long-term survival of the Muslims as a cultural, ethnic and religious minority group in Sweden and what can we as Muslims do to bring this about?

They thus want to draft a new brand of Islam, one that aims to reconcile the basic tenets of the faith - such as the five pillars, social justice and submission to the
will of God - with the realities of contemporary European life.

For this new generation "Euroislam" is not a zero sum game. They see no contradiction in being Muslim and European at the same time. In a report from the Swedish Muslim Youth Association you can read: "The goal for young Muslims should be to accept, understand and respect differences but also to understand common values and goals and try to implement them. Young Muslims should form a bridge between the European and the Muslim countries".

European islam could thus provide young Muslims with a way of respecting inherited traditions while living in a different world than their parents. It could also give them the confidence to practice their religion more openly unlike their parents or grandparents who saw their stay as temporary and were content to express their faith in private. The new generation sees Europe as its home and sees no reason not to worship more publicly.

If immigrants are integrated in this way, the Islamic communities in Europe can become a bridge between Europe and the immigrants' countries of origin. "Euromuslims" will then be able to set an example, and transfer democratic approaches and liberal ideas and reforms to their native countries. This would enable a fruitful triangular relationship to develop between the Islamic communities, their native countries and their new home countries, since many people living in the Diaspora want to maintain close contacts with their origins.
Thus Muslims in the West could make a contribution in the search of an answer to a question that has haunted Islam for the past centuries. How to reconcile tradition and modernity? The decline of Islamic science and art began already in the 14th century. Hair-splitting theologians then got the upper hand over scientists and poets and they, then as now in many places, saw the salvation from political and social misery in a literal application of the Koran. The principle of "taqlid" prevailed i.e. any opportunity to interpret the Koran freely was banned. Instead, the theory was carried through that everything that could be known and was worth knowing was not only known already but that knowledge was more reliable the closer the source was to the time it was manifested.

"Taqlid" thus implied a type of scientific and cultural doctrine of abstinence from which the Muslim world is still suffering. Intellectuals in many Muslim countries don´t have the freedom to analyse and find effective solutions to the problems of today. The tension between Islam and modernity could perhaps at least partly be answered by Muslim thinkers in Europe and transferred back to the Muslim world.

If this were to happen Europeans would pay back an old debt to the Muslim world.

The Arabs became the true inheritors of the Hellenic culture to which we in Europe so often refer. In the 8th and 9th centuries they saved and administered this heritage by extensive translations of the classical Greek works from Greek, Hebrew and Syriac sources into Arabic. The source texts were however not only translated but
commented upon, criticised and provided with additions. Later on scholars in Muslim Spain so to say became the midwives of Western humanism by familiarising Christian Europe with these classics.

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